

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 2133

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SUBJ: FY1977 MILITARY SECURITY ASSISTANCE -- COM ASSESSMENT

REF: A. STATE 036160 - PARA 6; B. BOGOTA 1792

1. THE U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM IN COLOMBIA IS AN EFFECTIVE DEVICE FOR MAINTAINING INFLUENCE WITH A KEY SECTOR OF COLOMBIAN LEADERSHIP, FOR HELPING THE GOC TO MAINTAIN A SET OF PRIORITIES THAT PLACE SOCIAL NEEDS WELL ABOVE MILITARY EXPENDITURES, AND FOR PROVIDING AN EXAMPLE OF U.S. SUPPORT OF A DEMOCRATIC L.A. REGIME AS WELL AS A NON-POLITICAL MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT.

2. IN THE SOUTH AMERICAN CONTEXT, THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY HAVE A NEARLY UNIQUE RECORD OF RESTRAINT. IN MODERN TIMES THERE HAS BEEN ONLY ONE INSTANCE OF MILITARY RULE IN COLOMBIA - THAT OF ROJAS PINILLA WHO BOTH ENTERED AND LEFT THE ROLE OF CHIEF OF STATE AT CIVILIAN REQUEST. DESPITE THE CONTINUING ACCEPTANCE OF CIVILIAN CONTROL, HOWEVER, THE MILITARY REMAIN ONE OF THE MAJOR FORCES IN COLOMBIAN SOCIETY. INDEED, ALTHOUGH WE DO NOT NOW FORESEE SUCH AN EVENT, ONE CANNOT RULE OUT A FUTURE DOMINANT ROLE FOR THE MILITARY IN COLOMBIA. OUR FMS CREDIT AND TRAINING PROGRAMS, ACCORDINGLY, SERVE US WELL BY MAINTAINING THE FAVORABLE DISPOSITION OF A KEY AND INFLUENTIAL GROUP.

3. IN THE AGONIZING TRADE-OFFS OF COMPETING PRIORITIES, RECENT
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COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENTS HAVE GIVEN THE NOD TO SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

REQUIREMENTS. AT PRESENT THE ARMED FORCES RECEIVE TEN PERCENT OF THE BUDGET AND ONE PERCENT OF GNP. AS A RESULT THE ARMED FORCES OPERATE LARGELY WITH ANTIQUATED, ILL MAINTAINED EQUIPMENT THAT IS POORLY SUITED EITHER FOR A CREDIBLE EXTERNAL DEFENSE OR FOR THE CRITICAL INTERNAL SECURITY ROLE. (SEE PARA 5, REFTEL B.) THE RELATIVELY MODEST FMS CREDIT AND TRAINING PROGRAMS PROVIDE SOME UPGRADING OF THE ARMED FORCES CAPACITY; THUS, AS NOTED ABOVE, MAINTAINING THE GOOD WILL OF MILITARY LEADERS AND, AT THE SAME TIME, ALLOWING THE GOC TO DEVOTE ITS RESOURCES TO CONSTRUCTIVE AND BADLY NEEDED PROGRAMS OF SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE BUILDING. THAT IS TO SAY, THAT TO THE EXTENT THAT WE PROVIDE THE GOC ADDED RESOURCES FOR DEFENSE MODERNIZATION, MORE OF THEIR OWN RESOURCES CAN BE USED TO SUPPORT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS WHICH ARE ALSO BENEFICIAL TO LONGER TERM US INTERESTS. (THE PLANNING OFFICE HAS TOLD THE MOD THAT IT WILL SUPPORT A CREDIT LINE OF UP TO 30 MILLION DOLLARS A YEAR FOR THE NEXT FEW YEARS.) THE REVERSE IS NOT NECESSARILY TRUE. DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE REQUIREMENTS TO BE FINANCED BY FOREIGN CAPITAL CAN BE EXPECTED TO GROW AS WELL, SO THAT DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE IS NOT LIKELY TO MAKE MORE GOC RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR DEFENSE.

4. THE PRECISE NATURE OF THE PROPOSED FMS PROGRAM FOR BOTH EQUIPMENT AND TRAINING IS EXPLAINED IN REFTEL B, AND THAT CABLE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AN INTEGRAL PART OF THIS ASSESSMENT. AS NOTED THEREIN, THE PROPOSED FMS LEVELS RELATE TO SPECIFIC GOC INVESTMENT PLANS FOR MILITARY MODERNIZATION. THE ARMED FORCES REQUEST FOR US ASSISTANCE IS BASED ON A) A CLEAR PREFERENCE FOR US EQUIPMENT AND TECHNOLOGY, AND B) A GOC DESIRE TO FUND THESE NEEDS WITH THE FMS CREDIT ARRANGEMENT INSTEAD OF CASH EXPENDITURES, THE LATTER BEING RESERVED FOR DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES. CONSEQUENTLY, THE ISSUE FACING US NOT WHETHER WE SHOULD OFFER CREDIT BUT WHETHER OR NOT TO RESPOND TO THE GOC REQUEST. TO BE UNRESPONSIVE WOULD NOT ONLY AROUSE COLOMBIAN RESENTMENT BUT WOULD RESULT IN RESORT TO THIRD COUNTRY SUPPORT, ALL OF WHICH WOULD DEFEAT THE BASIC INTEREST WE POSE. (THE SOVIET UNION IS NOW MAKING VERY ATTRACTIVE OFFERS WITH REGARD TO NAVAL PATROL CRAFT AND YAK-40 AIRPLANES; THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY TELL US THAT THEY DO NOT WANT TO BUY THIS EQUIPMENT, BUT IF THEY DO NOT HAVE A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE--AND THEY WOULD ACCEPT OLDER US EQUIPMENT--THEY WILL BE FORCED TO BUY THE SOVIET ARMS WHICH CAN BE FINANCED WITH THE COFFEE BARTER ACCOUNT.)

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5. WHEN VIEWED IN THE CONTEXT OF OTHER U.S. ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE AND THE FUNDS PROVIDED BY INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS, THE U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM DOES NOT BULK LARGE. WE ARE NOW IN THE PROCESS OF TERMINATING OUR AID PROGRAM, ON THE BASIS THAT COLOMBIA HAS "GRADUATED" AND NO LONGER NEEDS BILATERAL, CONCESSIONARY LENDING. NONETHELESS, A TOTAL OF TWENTY MILLION DOLLARS REMAINS TO BE DISBURSED IN FY 1977. ASSISTANCE BY INTERNA-

TIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS WAS 682 MILLION DOLLARS IN 1975.
DURING FY 1977 SUCH INSTITUTIONS ARE COMMITTED TO PROVIDE 640 MILLION DOLLARS TO THE GOC.

6. ON BALANCE THE FY 1977 MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM IS USEFUL AND COST-EFFECTIVE. IT IS COMPATIBLE WITH OUR OTHER PROGRAMS AND SERVES TO MAINTAIN THE COMITY OF A KEY SECTOR OF THE COLOMBIAN SOCIETY. WE COULD TERMINATE THE PROGRAM ONLY AT THE COST OF ILL WILL ON THE PART OF BOTH THE MILITARY AND THE CIVILIAN LEADERSHIP COMMUNITY, AND AT THE RISK OF DAMAGING THE CURRENT CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONSHIP. IN ADDITION WE BENEFIT FROM OUR PUBLIC SUPPORT OF NON-POLITICAL ARMED FORCES SERVING A FREELY ELECTED LATIN AMERICAN GOVERNMENT.

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